T

by t
com
effe
ing

of t
influ
no l
to b
unh
dom

the

adm
the
mist
men
depo

eccl
cont
Prot
whic

esta
tion
from
deve
peop

wha
the
Mer
oper
Proc
the
in th
if th
Pro
indu
hear

THE JESUITS' ESTATES BILL.

THE CITIZENS' COMMITTEE.

TO THE PEOPLE OF ONTARIO.

The passing of the "Act Respecting the Settlement of the Jesuit Estates" by the Québec Legislature, following the incorporation of the Jesuit Society, compels all who love their country to take earnest thought as to the most effective means of maintaining our civil and religious liberties, and preventing the encroachments of ecclesiastical authority.

We emphatically disclaim any desire to interfere with the free exercise of their religion on the part of our Roman Catholic fellow-citizens. The influences to which we are opposed threaten the rights of Roman Catholics no less than of Protestants. Were claims like those advanced in this Act to be put forward on behalf of any Protestant church or its rulers, we would unhesitatingly take the same stand on behalf of freedom from ecclesiastical domination.

The grounds on which we protest against the Act in question are mainly the following:

1. It recognizes a right on the part of the Pope to interfere in the administration of our civil affairs, which is derogatory to the supremacy of the Queen and menacing to the liberties of the people. There can be no mistaking such language as the following: "The Pope allows the Government to retain the proceeds of the sale of the Jesuit estates as a special deposit, to be disposed of hereafter with the sanction of the Holy See."

2. It places $400,000 of public funds at the disposal of the Pope for ecclesiastical and sectarian purposes—an appropriation of public money contrary to the whole spirit of British and Canadian legislation, unjust to the Protestant minority in Quebec, and subversive of the religious equality which ought to exist.

3. It permits the withdrawal of the whole of the proceeds of the Jesuits' estates, valued at over two millions of dollars ($2,000,000), with the exception of sixty thousand dollars ($60,000), offered for Protestant education, from the educational fund of the Province, though these estates had been devoted by the Crown "inviolably and exclusively to the education of the people."

4. In granting the common of Laprairie by way of commemorating what the Procurator of the Jesuit Fathers terms "that glorious concordat, the effecting whereof would be associated with the name of your (Mr. Mercier's) Government as soon as the Holy Father has ratified it," the Act opens up a wide field of future demands on the part of the Jesuits. The Procurator states the effect which he anticipates from the "concordat" in the following terms: "That is, that the establishments of the Jesuit Fathers in this Province are always allowed in accordance with their deserts, and, if they ask for it, to participate in the grants which the Government of this Province allows to other institutions to encourage teaching, education, industries, arts and colonization." Undoubtedly, therefore, we have not heard the last of the claims of the Jesuits!

Our profound conviction is that this Act is unjust, unconstitutional and disloyal; and that the endowment of a society which has been expelled from one Roman Catholic country in Europe after another; which was "absolutely and forever suppressed" by Pope Clement XIV., on grounds of morality as well as expediency; which was disqualified to hold property by Imperial Act in 1774; and which has been felt to be an intolerable evil in every country in which it has been established, is a measure fraught with serious peril to the peace and integrity of the Dominion.

This Act is not an isolated occurrence; it is but a somewhat startling development of the policy by which Ultramontanism has sought to control legislation and to secure ecclesiastical ascendancy in the government of this country.

The question at issue is not simply one of constitutional law. Even if it could be shown that the Legislature of Quebec acted within its powers in passing this Act, it would not alter our conviction that such legislation is perilous to the peace and welfare of the Dominion, and that on grounds of public policy it ought to be strenuously opposed. At the same time we are convinced that the arguments advanced to show that the Act is unconstitutional have not been successfully combated. It is to us a matter of deep regret and concern that the Dominion Government has announced its intention not to disallow the Act; and the gravity of the situation is greatly increased by the fact that the House of Commons has not intervened in any way for the protection of the interests which are threatened. Without impugning the motives by which members were influenced in voting, the fact remains that the two great parties in the House of Commons have combined to prevent any interference with the operation of this pernicious Act.

The matter dealt with in the Act, so far from being "one of provincial concern only," is one in which the whole Dominion is deeply interested. If one member of the body politic suffers, all the members suffer with it. The rights of the Protestant minority in Quebec are our rights. The dishonor of Quebec is the dishonor of Canada. If we are correct in asserting that this Act is derogatory to the supremacy of the Queen and menacing to the liberties of the people, then it concerns the honor of the whole Dominion to have it set aside. While provincial legislation should not, without urgent reason, be interfered with, it would be pressing the policy of non-interference to a point fatal to the unity and well-being of the Dominion to maintain that the central Government must stand helplessly by and allow measures such as that under consideration to become law.

We appeal to the people of Ontario to rise above party and consider the gravity of the issue here presented. While recognizing the importance of other matters before the country on which public opinion is divided, our clear conviction is that this question should take precedence of them all. We do not aim either at antagonizing or promoting any political party, but we urge men of all shades of political opinion to recognize the supreme importance of maintaining unimpaired our heritage of civil and religious freedom, and to unite in taking the wisest and most energetic steps to undo the mischief which has been wrought.

It is our conviction that the vote given in the House of Commons does not truly reflect public opinion, and that it may not be useless to bring influence to bear by exercising the right of petition.

We suggest that action be taken without delay on the following lines:

1. That petitions be presented to the Governor-General, asking him to disallow the Act, or to dissolve the House of Commons, so as to enable the constituencies to pronounce on the question at the earliest possible moment. The Committee have accordingly prepared and recommend a petition in that form. A petition for disallowance only has also been prepared for those who prefer it.

2. That steps be taken to have the constitutionality of the Act properly tested in the courts. The opinion of counsel is being taken on this subject.

3. That such an organization be formed, and such measures adopted, as shall ensure united political action for the purpose of securing and maintaining perfect religious equality throughout the entire Dominion, and preventing ecclesiastical dictation in public affairs.

It has been decided to call a convention from all parts of the Province, to be held the 11th and 12th days of June, with the view of forming a provincial organization, by which the great objects set forth in this address may be advanced. It is hoped that from every city, town, village and township in Ontario representatives will be sent to take part in this convention. We further express the earnest hope that similar action will be taken by the other Provinces of the Dominion, and we shall be prepared gladly to co-operate with the sister Provinces in securing ends which are of unspeakable importance to the whole country.

Every important interest of the people commends and sanctions this appeal. The sense of right, the love of peace, the hope of progress in all that makes a country truly great, the determination to maintain the liberties handed down to us from our fathers, all combine to urge us to sustained and strenuous resistance to the malign influences which threaten the well-being of our country. Our prayer is that the God of nations may guide us to the choice of measures which shall be for the lasting welfare of the land.

Signed for the members of the Toronto Citizens' Committee, as follows: E. D. Armour, T. B. Armstrong, Wm. Bell, John Bailie, Wm. Caven, D.D., J. M. Cameron (Rev.), A. C. Courtice, B.D., S. C. Duncan-Clark, J. W. Carter, Geo. Downard, Alex. Fraser, M.A., W. Gooderham, W. H. Howland, J. L. Hughes, W. J. Hunter, D.D., H. A. E. Kent, John Langtry (Rev.), Frank Lloyd, Wm. Lee, W. J. McMaster, D. J. Macdonnell, B.D., G. M. Milligan, B.A., Wm. Morton, J. J. MacLaren, Q.C., J. K. Macdonald, John MacMillan (Ald.) Geo. E. Morrison, E. Medcalf, Robert Newman, Henry O'Brien, W. W. Ogden, M.D., S. B. Pollard, M.D., G. H. Robinson, John T. Small, A. Sutherland, D.D., J. Steele, B. H. Scott, H. B. Scott, F. Somers, J. T. Slater, W. F. Wilson (Rev.), Geo. Webber (Rev.), Wm. Wilson, L. Walker, G. Worrell.

TORONTO, May 9th, 1889.

As the expenses incidental to the action now taken are necessarily heavy, the Committee ask contributions thereto from those interested and that the same be sent promptly to J. K. Macdonald, Esq., Treasurer Citizens' Committee, 15 Toronto Street, Toronto.

All such donations will be acknowledged through the press unless the donor orders otherwise.

Please address all communications (except donations) to W. Banks, Secretary, 94 Adelaide Street East, Toronto.